

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Please amend claims 1, 6, and 10 as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A catheter introducer assembly, comprising:
 - a) a needle assembly comprising a needle having a diameter, a proximal end, attached to a needle hub, a distal end extending therefrom, the distal end including a sharp tip with a bevel and a longitudinal axis therebetween, said needle further including a bent area disposed between said proximal and distal ends such that no portion of said bevel is in said bent area, said bevel extending at an angle relative to said longitudinal axis;
 - b) a catheter assembly comprising a tubular catheter having a proximal end attached to a catheter hub, and a distal end, said introducer needle being coaxially received within said catheter;
 - c) a needle tip protector disposed within said catheter hub, said needle tip protector is slidably disposed onto said needle, whereby when said needle is proximally removed from said catheter said protector remains attached to said needle.
2. (Original) The catheter introducer assembly of claim 1 wherein said bent area on said needle is angled 45 – 90 degrees away from its original direction.

3. (Original) The catheter introducer assembly of claim 1 wherein said needle diameter is constant between its distal and proximal ends.

4. (Previously Amended) The catheter introducer assembly of claim 1 further comprising a sleeve on said needle.

5. (Previously Amended) The catheter introducer assembly of claim 4 wherein said sleeve is attached proximal to said bent area to help secure said needle in said protector when said needle is removed from said catheter.

6. (Currently Amended) A catheter introducer assembly, comprising:

- a) a needle assembly comprising a hollow needle having an outer diameter, a proximal end, attached to a needle hub, a distal end extending therefrom, and a longitudinal axis therebetween, said needle further including a bent area disposed between said proximal and distal ends such that a longitudinal axis of said distal end of said needle is off set from, but generally parallel to, a longitudinal axis of said proximal end of said needle;
- b) a catheter assembly comprising a tubular catheter having a proximal end attached to a catheter hub, and a distal end, said introducer needle being coaxially received within said catheter;
- c) a needle tip protector disposed within said catheter hub, said needle tip protector is slidably disposed about said needle such that

when said needle is proximally removed from said catheter said bent area prevents said needle tip protector from sliding off said needle so that said needle tip protector remains attached to said needle.

7. (Original) The catheter introducer assembly of claim 6 wherein said bent area on said needle is angled 45 – 90 degrees away from its original direction.

8. (Previously Amended) The catheter introducer assembly of claim 6 wherein said needle further comprising a sleeve on said needle.

9. (Original) The catheter introducer assembly of claim 8 wherein said sleeve is attached proximal to said bent area to help secure said needle in said protector when said needle is removed from said catheter.

10. (Currently Amended) A catheter introducer assembly, comprising:

- a) a needle assembly comprising a hollow needle having a proximal end, attached to a needle hub, a distal end extending therefrom, and a longitudinal axis therebetween and a constant outer diameter between said distal and proximal ends, said needle further including a bent area disposed between said proximal and distal ends such that a longitudinal axis of said distal end of said needle

is off set from, but generally parallel to, a longitudinal axis of said proximal end of said needle;

- b) a catheter assembly comprising a tubular catheter having a proximal end attached to a catheter hub, and a distal end, said introducer needle being coaxially received within said catheter;
- c) a needle tip protector disposed within said catheter hub, said needle tip protector is slidably disposed about said needle such that when said needle is proximally removed from said catheter said bent area prevents said needle tip protector from sliding off said needle so that said needle tip protector remains attached to said needle.

11. (Original) The catheter introducer assembly of claim 10 wherein said bent area on said needle is angled 45 – 90 degrees away from its original direction.

12. (Previously Amended) The catheter introducer assembly of claim 10 wherein said needle further comprising a sleeve on said needle.

13. (Original) The catheter introducer assembly of claim 12 wherein said sleeve is attached proximal to said bent area to help secure said needle in said protector when said needle is removed from said catheter.